



CRS Report for Congress

Bosnia and the European Union Military Force (EUFOR): Post-NATO Peacekeeping

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Summary

On December 2, 2004, NATO formally concluded its Stabilization Force (SFOR) mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina and handed over peace stabilization duties to a European Union force (EUFOR). The mission of the EU's Operation *Althea* has been to ensure continued compliance with the 1995 Dayton peace agreement and contribute to a secure environment and Bosnia's efforts towards European integration. The EU recently postponed a decision to significantly reduce the 6,500-strong force until early 2007. NATO retains a small headquarters presence in Sarajevo to provide advice on defense reforms and to support counterterrorism efforts and the apprehension of wanted war crimes suspects believed to be hiding in or transiting through Bosnia. Eleven years after Dayton, many Members of Congress remain engaged and interested in Bosnia's prospects for sustainable peace and efforts to integrate into NATO and the EU; the 110th Congress is likely to maintain this interest. This report may be updated as events warrant. See also CRS Report RS22324, *Bosnia: Overview of Current Issues*, by Julie Kim.

SFOR Background and U.S. Policy

The 1995 Dayton peace agreement ended a 3 ½-year war that pitted Bosnia's Muslim, Croat, and Serb communities against one another. NATO first deployed an Implementation Force (IFOR) of nearly 60,000 troops to Bosnia to enforce compliance with the military aspects of the Dayton accords. Although IFOR successfully carried out the military tasks outlined in the Dayton agreement, the continued need for an external military presence to provide a secure environment in Bosnia led NATO to replace IFOR with a smaller Stabilization Force (SFOR, initially with about 32,000 troops) in December 1996. NATO extended SFOR a second time in June 1998, this time without a specified end-date. Instead, NATO outlined a number of benchmarks to measure progress toward a self-sustaining peace in Bosnia. Periodic mission reviews by NATO of SFOR operations assessed an increasingly stable security situation and prompted gradual reductions in SFOR's force strength over time. The U.N. Security Council authorized NATO's original

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IFOR mission in December 1995, the follow-on SFOR mission one year later, and subsequently renewed its authorization for SFOR's operations on an annual basis.¹

The United States initially contributed close to 20,000 troops to IFOR, or about one-third of the total force. In 1995, President Clinton justified the U.S. contribution as an appropriate response to the suffering and instability caused by the Bosnian war and as a demonstration of U.S. leadership in NATO, although he pledged at the time that the commitment would not exceed one year. The Bush Administration frequently invoked the “in together, out together” policy with the European allies on maintaining an international security presence in the Balkans. As the smaller SFOR drew down over the years, so did the U.S. contingent, and its share averaged about 15% of the total force in the final years (for example, the U.S. contribution was about 1,000 out of a total of 7,000-8,000 troops in SFOR in late 2004). Throughout, the United States retained command over the NATO force in Bosnia; NATO's residual headquarters presence has likewise come under U.S. command and includes a small number of U.S. forces. About 1,700 U.S. troops serve in the NATO peacekeeping force in nearby Kosovo.

Transition to EUFOR in Bosnia

Concept Evolution. EU heads of state expressed their willingness and readiness to lead a military operation to follow SFOR as early as 2002.² EU officials viewed the initiative to lead a follow-on peacekeeping force in Bosnia as an outgrowth of the EU's European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP), as well as a logical extension of the EU's growing involvement in the western Balkans. Bosnia is in negotiations with the EU on a Stabilization and Association Agreement and aspires to eventual EU membership. The EU also has experience in fielding a police training and advisory mission in Bosnia in the ESDP framework — the EU Police Mission in Bosnia currently comprises just over 150 international police personnel, and its mandate runs through the end of 2007. Moreover, the Dayton-mandated Office of the High Representative is “double-hatted” as the EU's Special Representative in Bosnia and is scheduled to evolve into an EU-only office by mid-2007. By assuming peacekeeping duties in Bosnia, EU members aimed to further develop ESDP on an operational level, as well as complement the broader EU integration strategy for Bosnia.

By the December 2003 NATO ministerial meetings, some apparent differences between NATO and the EU had been worked out, and NATO members reached consensus on the concept, if not yet the details, of a follow-on EU military mission in Bosnia. A fundamental principle agreed to early on was that any EU military mission in Bosnia should fall within the so-called Berlin Plus framework. Berlin Plus refers to arrangements finalized in late 2002-early 2003 on institutional and operational links between NATO and the EU that grant the EU access to NATO planning and assets for operations in which NATO is not engaged. The first test case for Berlin Plus occurred in early 2003 with the EU's takeover of the small NATO mission in Macedonia. NATO's

¹ The last U.N. resolution authorizing SFOR operations was Resolution 1551, passed unanimously on July 9, 2004, which extended authorization for SFOR for a further six months and welcomed the EU's intention to launch an EU military mission in December 2004.

² See Presidency Conclusions, Copenhagen European Council, December 12-13, 2002. European Council Press Release No. 15917/02, January 29, 2003.

Allied Harmony mission in Macedonia was concluded in March 2003 and replaced by the EU's Operation *Concordia*, a small and limited mission of 350 troops that ended in December 2003.³

Planning, Decisions, and Handover in 2004. Conceptual details of the transition evolved as NATO and EU planners worked to develop plans for mid-2004 summit meetings. Early agreed concepts included formally concluding SFOR and putting in place a new and distinct EU mission in a seamless transition. The EU mission was to emphasize broader reform objectives in Bosnia, including closer association with the EU.⁴ An issue of greater contention centered on the form and function of the residual NATO "headquarters presence." Early on, NATO officials called for a small military presence to carry out defense reform functions, such as training and inter-operability exercises in conjunction with Bosnia's expected future membership in NATO's Partnership for Peace (PFP), as well as intelligence collection, counterterrorism, and apprehension of persons indicted for war crimes. This proposed multifaceted set of tasks for the residual NATO presence suggested to some a more robust operational capability than just an advisory or support presence. Some European officials reportedly resisted plans that could have led the NATO presence to parallel functions of the EU force. They also emphasized the need for the EU to maintain full operational control of, and autonomous decision-making authority over, the military mission.⁵ In the final arrangement, EUFOR took over the primary military stabilization role, while the NATO headquarters presence was to focus primarily on defense reform. However, both share some operational tasks.

The war criminals issue clouded the transition and the legacy of SFOR, especially with respect to former Bosnian Serb leader and wanted war crimes suspect Radovan Karadzic. In 2004, SFOR and the Office of the High Representative embarked on numerous joint measures to increase pressure on Karadzic, including detaining his close associates and sanctioning or dismissing his alleged supporters. SFOR and local police also launched some unsuccessful raids against Karadzic in Republika Srpska. Despite ongoing efforts by NATO, EUFOR, and local authorities to apprehend Karadzic and increase pressure on his support network, he and former Bosnian Serb General Ratko Mladic have eluded capture for many years. Although local authorities bear the primary responsibility for apprehending war crimes suspects, some observers believe that the lack of resolution of this issue marred SFOR's cumulative record of achievement in Bosnia and threatens to do the same for EUFOR.

³ The EU initially planned to deploy an EU force to Macedonia in 2002 but had to postpone because of delays in finalizing the Berlin Plus agreements. See also CRS Report RL32342, *NATO and the European Union*, by Kristin Archick and Paul Gallis. For more information on the EU force in Macedonia, see CRS Report RL32172, *Macedonia (FYROM): Post-Conflict Situation and U.S. Policy*, by Julie Kim. In 2003, the EU also launched a peacekeeping mission in Congo that did not utilize the Berlin Plus framework.

⁴ Summary of the Report by Javier Solana, EU High Representative for CFSP, on a Possible EU Deployment in Bosnia-Herzegovina, February 23, 2004, available at [http://www.ohr.int/print/?content_id=31930].

⁵ Judy Dempsey, "US and EU in Dispute on Control of Bosnia Force," *Financial Times*, March 9, 2004.

Prior to the December 2004 handover, the United States appeared to send somewhat contradictory signals at times on the desired level of U.S. engagement in the Balkans. On the one hand, some U.S. officials, especially in the military, expressed an interest in concluding the U.S. military role in the Balkans in view of greater or more pressing U.S. priorities in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere. For them, handing over operational security matters to the EU in Bosnia represented another opportunity, in a relatively secure environment in Europe, for global security burden-sharing. The larger EU role is also seen to be consistent with U.S. goals for the western Balkan region to eventually achieve full integration into the EU. On the other hand, some U.S. officials may be wary of French and other European long-term aspirations to build up European military structures separate from NATO. Those with this perspective might be concerned that a successful EU mission in Bosnia could work to diminish NATO's primacy — and possibly U.S. influence — on European security matters. Others also see a continued U.S. role in enhancing stability in the Balkans with a U.S. military presence.

After the handover, about 200 U.S. forces remained in Bosnia as part of the NATO headquarters presence in Camp Butmir in Sarajevo and at the U.S. Eagle Base in Tuzla (on the basis of a bilateral military agreement). The U.S. presence has been used for providing a staging area for military exercises, supporting the EU mission, and demonstrating the enduring U.S. commitment to Bosnia's security.⁶ The residual U.S. presence at both bases has been involved in providing intelligence support, engaging in efforts to detain war crimes suspects, and working to deny safe havens for Islamist extremists and their supporters in Bosnia. In 2006, the United States announced the withdrawal by the end of the year of its forces at Eagle Base; a small number of U.S. intelligence officers continue to serve with the NATO Headquarters presence.

Key Dates.

- On April 26, 2004, EU members endorsed a “General Concept” for an EU-led mission, including a military component of about 7,000 troops, in Bosnia. The concept established the broad strategy for the EU's engagement in Bosnia. It called for the EU military operation to fulfill the military tasks of the Dayton peace agreement, have a mandate authorized by the U.N. Security Council under Chapter VII of the U.N. Charter, and come under the political authority of the EU Council's Political and Security Committee (PSC).
- At its June 28-29 Istanbul summit, NATO nations confirmed the decision to conclude SFOR by the end of the year and welcomed the EU's readiness to deploy a new and distinct mission. NATO members agreed that NATO's residual military presence would have the “principal task” of providing advice on defense reforms and would also “undertake certain operational supporting tasks, such as counter-terrorism...; supporting the ICTY...with regard to the detention of persons indicted for war crimes; and intelligence sharing with the EU.”

⁶ Statement by Maj. Gen. James W. Darden, U.S. European Command, at a hearing before the House Armed Services Committee, July 12, 2004.

- On July 9, the U.N. Security Council unanimously passed Resolution 1551 which welcomed “the EU’s intention to launch an EU mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina, including a military component, from December 2004.”
- On July 12, EU members adopted a “Joint Action” on the EU military operation in Bosnia, named *Althea*. It designated the EU Operation Commander and EU Force Commander. It reaffirmed the EU’s comprehensive approach toward Bosnia and support for its progress toward EU integration.
- On October 11, the EU Council approved the Operational Plan for the EUFOR Operation *Althea*.
- By a unanimous vote, the U.N. Security Council passed Resolution 1575 on November 22. Acting under Chapter VII of the U.N. Charter, it authorized EUFOR to be the legal successor to SFOR and to carry out a peace stabilization role for an initial period of one year. EU officials have estimated that EUFOR’s mandate in Bosnia could extend to three years.
- At a ceremony in Sarajevo on December 2, NATO formally concluded the SFOR mission and the EU launched Operation *Althea*. *Althea* operates out of three military areas in Bosnia (Tuzla, Mostar, and Banja Luka), each comprising a multinational task force, and also has an integrated police unit and theater troops. 33 countries led by Germany, Italy, and the United Kingdom contributed the initial forces to EUFOR.
- On November 21, 2005, the U.N. Security Council passed Resolution 1639, which authorized EUFOR and the NATO Headquarters in Bosnia for a further twelve months.
- On November 21-22, the EU Council took several decisions on the EU’s relationship with Bosnia including opening Stabilization and Association Agreement negotiations, continuing an EU police mission in Bosnia, and keeping an EU military presence in Bosnia at basically unchanged force levels for the coming year.
- On the date of its first anniversary on December 4, EUFOR held a change of command ceremony, with Italian General Gian Marco Chiarini taking over as EU Force Commander.
- On November 13, 2006, EU foreign and defense ministers considered a proposal to reduce EUFOR’s troop strength based on a positive evaluation of the security situation. However, ministers postponed a decision to cut EUFOR reportedly in consideration of Kosovo’s status

process and potential for regional unrest.⁷ EUFOR reductions could be implemented beginning in February 2007, and the entire force could be withdrawn by 2008.

- On November 21, the U.N. Security Council further extended EUFOR's and NATO's mandates in Bosnia until November 2007 in Resolution 1722.
- On December 5, German Rear Admiral Hans-Jochen Witthauer replaced General Marco Chiarini as EU Force Commander for EUFOR-Althea.

EUFOR Outlook

The December 2004 handover ceremony marked an historic end to NATO's longstanding mission in Bosnia and the beginning of a new EU military undertaking. Many U.S. and European officials believe that success in handing over the stabilization mission in Bosnia from NATO to the EU has been important not just for Bosnia's future but also for EU aspirations to assume greater security responsibilities. EUFOR is seen as an important precedent for future potential mission handovers from NATO to the EU, for example possibly in Kosovo. European support for EUFOR's continuation appears strong, although some EU members are likely eager to reduce their troop commitments in Bosnia as the country makes progress in its efforts to integrate with the EU.

EUFOR has conducted several exercises and operations aimed at collecting illegal weapons, improving coordination with NATO, and disrupting organized criminal activity. EUFOR has worked closely with Bosnian law enforcement agencies on combating organized crime, including conducting joint anti-crime operations and arrests. Small units of Liaison and Observation Teams (LOT) have been stationed to increase EUFOR visibility in local communities. Both EUFOR and the NATO presence remain engaged in the pursuit of war crimes fugitives and in pressuring their support networks.

The transition from NATO to the EU force incurred no discernible political impact in Bosnia. During the EUFOR planning stage, Bosnian government officials accepted the concept of a European follow-on force, although they emphasized the need for a continued NATO and U.S. presence. Bosnian officials often cite the critical role of U.S. leadership in eventually bringing an end to the Bosnian war in 1995, especially in the wake of failed U.N. peacekeeping missions (comprised largely of European forces) during the Bosnian war. The ongoing NATO presence in Bosnia can serve to reinforce the transatlantic dimension and Bosnia's aspirations to join NATO; Bosnia's recent admittance into NATO's Partnership for Peace program is likely to expand activities with NATO. On the other hand, European integration today represents the ultimate strategic perspective of all of the western Balkan states, including Bosnia, and the EU is expected to lead the international presence on the ground in Bosnia, especially as the Office of the High Representative winds down in 2007.

⁷ Paul Ames, "Concern over Kosovo Delays EU Decision on Cutting Bosnia Force," *Associated Press*, November 13, 2006.